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Pope Benedict XVI

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October 2007



On St. Cyril of Alexandria – General Audience October 3, 2007

... Upon the death of his uncle Theophilus, though still young, Cyril was elected bishop of the influential Church of Alexandria in 412, which he governed with great energy for thirty-two years, working tirelessly to affirm its primacy in the East, strengthened by its traditional bonds with Rome. ... In 417 or 418, the bishop of Alexandria showed himself to be a realist and healed the rift in the communion with Constantinople, which had been going on since 406, in the wake of Chrysostom's removal from office. But the old conflict with the See of Constantinople was rekindled some ten years later, when Nestorius was elected in 428, a prestigious but severe monk, educated in Antioch. The new bishop of Constantinople quickly brought much opposition because he preferred the title "Mother of Christ" (*Christotòkos*) for Mary, in place of "Mother of God" (*Theotòkos*), which was already beloved in popular devotion.

The reason for Bishop Nestorius' choice was his adhesion to the Christology of the Antiochian tradition, which, to safeguard the importance of Christ's humanity, ended up affirming its separation from his divinity. Thus, there was no longer an authentic union between God and the man Christ, and therefore, one could no longer speak of a "Mother of God." Cyril -- the leading exponent of Alexandrian Christology at the time, one who emphatically underlined the unity of Christ's person--reacted almost immediately, using every means possible beginning in 429, even writing letters to Nestorius himself. ... He wrote to Nestorius: "It is necessary to explain the teaching and interpretation of the faith to the people in an irreproachable way, and recall that he who scandalizes even one of these little ones who believes in Christ will suffer an intolerable punishment."

In the same letter to Nestorius--which later, in 451, would be approved by the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon -- Cyril describes his Christological faith with clarity: ... Soon the bishop of Alexandria, thanks to shrewd alliances, saw to it that Nestorius was repeatedly condemned: by the Roman See with a series of twelve anathemas Cyril himself composed and, in the end, by the council held in Ephesus in 431, the Third Ecumenical Council. The assembly, which took place amid tumultuous and alternating incidents, concluded with the great triumph of devotion to Mary and with the exile of the bishop of Constantinople, who refused to recognize Mary under the title of "Mother of God," because of a mistaken Christology, which claimed that Christ was divided in himself. ... St. Cyril of Alexandria was an untiring and firm witness of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, emphasizing his unity above all, as he repeats in his first letter in 433 to Bishop Succens: "One alone is the Son, one alone is the Lord Jesus Christ, before the incarnation and after the incarnation. In fact, it is not a question of a Son, the Logos, born of God the Father, and another, born of the holy Virgin; but we believe that he who is before all time was born according to the flesh of a woman."

This affirmation, beyond its doctrinal significance, shows that faith in Jesus, the "Logos," born of the Father, is also deeply rooted in history because, as St. Cyril says, this same Jesus came in time by being born of Mary, the "Theotòkos," and will be, according to his promise, with us always. And this is important: God is eternal, he was born of a woman and remains with us every day. We live in this trust, in this trust we find the path of our life.

[After the audience, the Holy Father addressed the audience in various languages. In

English, he said:] Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The subject of today's catechesis is Saint Cyril of Alexandria, known as the "pillar of faith" and the "seal of all the Fathers". ... He was also of utmost influence at the Council of Ephesus, supporting the recognition of the Virgin Mary as the "Mother of God."

Month of the Rosary, "A Means for Contemplating Jesus" – Vatican City, October 7, 2007

Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI gave today to the crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square when he led the praying of the midday Angelus.

* * *

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This first Sunday of October offers us two reasons for prayer and reflection: the memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary, which is today, and the commitment to missions, to which this month is dedicated in a special way.

The traditional image of the Madonna of the Rosary depicts Mary holding the child Jesus in her arm and giving the rosary to St. Dominic. This significant iconography shows that the rosary is a means given by the Virgin for contemplating Jesus and, meditating on his life, for loving and following him always more faithfully.

This is something that Mary has also offered in various apparitions. I am thinking especially of her appearance at Fatima that took place ninety years ago. To the three little shepherds, Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco, presenting herself as "the Madonna of the Rosary," she insistently recommended praying the rosary every day to bring an end to the war.

We also desire to welcome the Virgin's maternal request, committing ourselves to saying the rosary with faith for peace in our families, in countries, and in the whole world. In any case, we know that peace spreads where men and institutions are open to the Gospel. The month of October helps us to recall this fundamental truth through a mobilization that seeks to promote an authentic missionary drive in each community, and to support the work of priests, religious and laypeople who work on the Church's mission frontiers.

With special care we prepare to celebrate, on Oct. 21, the World Mission Day, which will have as its theme "All the Churches for All the World."

The proclamation of the Gospel remains the primary service that the Church owes to humanity, to offer the salvation of Christ to the man of our time, who is in many ways humiliated and oppressed, and to orientate in a Christian way cultural, social, and ethical transformations that are unfolding in the world.

This year we are moved toward a renewal of missionary commitment for still another reason: the fiftieth anniversary of the encyclical "Fidei Donum" of the Servant of God Pius XII, which promoted and encouraged cooperation among the Churches for the mission "ad gentes."

With pleasure I recall also that 150 years ago five priests and a layman of the Institute of Don Mazza in Verona departed for Africa, for present-day Sudan. Among them was St. Daniel Comboni, future bishop of central Africa and patron of the people of that region, whose liturgical memorial is Oct. 10.

We entrust all missionaries to the intercession of these pioneers of the Gospel and to the many other canonized and beatified missionaries, and especially to the maternal protection of the Queen of the Holy Rosary.

O Mary, help us to remember that every Christian is called to be a proclaimer of the Gospel by his word

and by his life.

[Translation by ZENIT]

* * *

[After the *Angelus* the Holy Father said in English:]

I extend heartfelt greetings to the English-speaking visitors here today. In this month of October, dedicated to the holy rosary, we ponder with Mary the mysteries of our salvation, and we ask the Lord to help us grow in our understanding of the marvelous things he has done for us.

May God fill you with his love and may he grant you and all those dear to you his blessings of joy and peace.

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On Peace, Missions and Justice – Angelus Address in Naples, October 21, 2007

... Let us give these prayer intentions to Mary Most Holy, whom, in the month of October we love to invoke with the title with which she is venerated at the shrine of Pompeii, not far from here: Queen of the Rosary. To her we entrust the many pilgrims who have traveled from Caserta.

May the Holy Virgin also protect those who in various ways commit themselves to the common good and the just order of society, as has been highlighted rather well during the 45th Social Week of Italian Catholics. The event is being held in these days in Pistoia and Pisa, one-hundred years after the first such Week, promoted above all by Giuseppe Toniolo, an illustrious figure among Christian economists.

On the Call to Martyrdom--Angelus Address following the beatification ceremony of 498 Spanish martyrs from the twentieth century

... This martyrdom of ordinary life is a particularly important witness in the secularized societies of our time. It is the peaceful battle of love that all Christians, like Paul, have to fight tirelessly; the race to spread the Gospel that commits us until death. May Mary, Queen of Martyrs and Star of Evangelization, help us and assist us in our daily witness.